

# The Oregonian

## Development chief has eye on businesses in town

**Projects - Rob Pochert says doing well by existing entities helps draw new business into a city**

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BEAVERTON -- The city's new economic development manager, with 16 years in the business of improving local economies, has learned that the best way to do his job is to nurture existing businesses instead of always looking for the next big thing.

Rob Pochert, 59, said recruiting new businesses to Beaverton is an important part of his job. But serving existing businesses can help draw others.

"I've had a lot of success," said Pochert, who most recently worked in Bellingham, Wash. "I've also made most of the mistakes you can make. And I'm not shy about learning."

Pochert will play a role in important issues facing the city, including development of the Round at Beaverton Central and the former Westgate Theatre site, redevelopment of the downtown core and growth of the city's Open Technology Business Center.

He replaces Janet Young, who left in September to take a similar job with Gresham. Pochert, who started March 6, said he is learning about Beaverton and meeting the main players in the business community.

"It appears to me it's a very dynamic community," he said. "It seems like there's a tremendous amount of potential."

Pochert also is impressed that Beaverton has an economic development plan, adopted in 2000, that actually is being used.

"I had the impression this was definitely not a piece of shelf art," he said.

The job gave Pochert an opportunity to return to Oregon, where he has family and a strong professional network.

He and his wife live in Hillsboro and have five grown children.

"We're enjoying our empty-nesthood," he said.

Pochert enjoys camping, gourmet cooking and trips to the Oregon Coast. He's also a woodworker and expects to support the local economy with trips to Rockler Woodworking and Hardware in Beaverton Town Square.

Pochert said his background in the private sector shapes the way he does his job, with a customer-service approach. He sees himself as a clearinghouse for businesses -- if he doesn't know the answer, he will find someone who does.

The Illinois native worked in land development in the Chicago area for about 10 years, including construction of a 7,000-acre destination resort in Illinois.

Pochert wanted to live on the West Coast, so in 1983 he moved to Seattle, where he worked for developers. After tiring of the work and traffic, he moved to Corvallis and to the other side of the counter, becoming a city liaison to the business community.

Since then, he has worked in Grants Pass, Medford and Bellingham. He counts keeping Boise-Cascade in Medford after its plant burned and a Grants Pass cabinetmaker's 10-year expansion project among his successes.

In his three years as executive director of the Bellingham Whatcom Economic Development Council in Whatcom County, Wash., Pochert changed the agency's focus from recruiting new business to retaining and supporting existing businesses.

Pochert comes to Beaverton with good references, said Lorraine Clarno, president of the Beaverton Area Chamber of Commerce. Clarno's counterpart in Bellingham told her that Beaverton was fortunate to land Pochert.

"That's always a good thing to hear," she said.

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